



# Indiana State Department of Health

## Epidemiology Resource Center

### Quick Facts

#### About...Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF)

##### What is RMSF?

RMSF is the name given to a disease caused by the germ, *Rickettsia rickettsii* that can infect both animals and people. Named because it was first found the Rocky Mountain area, the disease occurs most in the states of the southeast United States. Cases occur each summer in Indiana.

##### How is RMSF spread?

RMSF is spread by the bite of the dog tick, *Demacentor variabilis*. Ticks catch the germ from small wild living rodents. The ticks then give the germ to humans by feeding on blood.

##### Who is at risk for RMSF?

Anyone who works or plays outside where there are ticks can catch RMSF.

##### How do I know if I have RMSF?

You cannot tell without seeing your doctor. Your doctor will give you an exam, ask you questions, and take blood for a lab test to see if you have RMSF.

People with RMSF first show signs 5-10 days after a tick bite. These signs may be:

- Fever
- Bad headache
- Feeling like you need to vomit
- Vomiting
- Not hungry
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Rash

## **How is RMSF treated?**

RMSF can be treated with medicine from your doctor.

## **How is RMSF prevented?**

Avoid tick bites:

- Wear white or pale colored long pants with cuffs tucked into socks and long sleeves when walking in grassy or wooded areas. It is easier to spot ticks on light colored clothes.
- Put bug spray with DEET on clothes, socks, shoes, and skin. Stronger bug spray with Permethrin will keep ticks off clothes and shoes but should not be applied directly to skin.
- Check every 2 hours for ticks on clothes and skin.
- After coming inside from grassy or wooded areas, brush off clothes and body. Look for ticks all over your body; don't forget to check in the areas of the groin, back of neck and knees, and armpits. Take a shower and wash clothes at a high temperature.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information, please refer to: <http://www.cdc.gov/rmsf/>.

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